

# **BUSH DISCUSSES “NEW WAY FORWARD” IN IRAQ AT STATE DEPARTMENT**

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**WASHINGTON, DECEMBER 12** -- President Bush spoke of charting “a new way forward in Iraq” after meeting with State Department officials December 11 to discuss developments on the ground in that nation.

Bush conferred with leaders of provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), who are engaged in reconstruction and government advisory operations at the local level throughout Iraq.

“I appreciate the advice I got from those folks in the field. And that advice is an important part, an important component of putting together a new way forward in Iraq,” Bush said after the meeting at the State Department.

Bush said he also looks forward to conferring with his military advisers before laying out his plan for moving forward in Iraq. The efforts and recommendations of the State and Defense departments need to be coordinated closely, he said, “so that when I do speak to the American people, they will know that I've listened to all aspects of government, and that the way forward is the way forward to achieve our objective: to succeed in Iraq.”

The president made no mention of the recommendations recently set forth by the bipartisan Iraq Study Group. That group suggested, among other things, that the United States engage in direct diplomacy with all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Syria, in an effort to stabilize Iraq. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=December&x=20061206121224ndyblehs0.5405237>).)

Bush said he and the State Department officials discussed Iraq's neighbors and “the responsibilities that they have to help this young Iraqi democracy survive,” but while he expressed appreciation for the Iraqi government's efforts to engage with each of its neighbors, he offered no indication that the United States would be prepared to talk to countries that it considers unhelpful.

“After all, one of the things we're trying to do is help this government get on its feet so it can govern and it can conduct its own foreign policy,” he said.

Bush said Iraq is “a central component of defeating the extremists who want to establish safe haven in the Middle East.”

The president is expected to present a revised Iraq policy within the coming two weeks. He meets December 13 with senior Pentagon officials and senior military officers.

A transcript (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/12/20061211-2.html>) of the president's remarks is available on the White House Web site.

For more on U.S. policies, see Iraq Update  
([http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle\\_east\\_north\\_africa/iraq.html](http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html)).

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